



Position Description

Senior Research & Evaluation Specialist

David P. Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality

Forum for Youth Investment

FULL TITLE: Senior Research & Evaluation Specialist

SUPERVISOR: Director, Research & Evaluation

PURPOSE: The Senior Research & Evaluation (R&E) Specialist will lead research, evaluation, and measurement projects to advance strategic priorities in partnership with internal and external stakeholders. Internally, serve as a thought partner on programmatic metrics aligned to the Forum's strategic plan. Externally, design and implement research and evaluation projects with youth serving organizations who are designing, implementing, evaluating, and sustaining continuous quality improvement systems, and with system leaders working to strengthen policy and practice in youth serving ecosystems to advance racial equity and social justice. Contributing to organizational and field facing research synthesis and serving as a thought partner to data savvy organizational partners, the Senior R&E Specialist blends their evaluation expertise and knowledge of youth development best practices with demonstrated excellence in project management to support the Forum and our clients in youth-serving systems to leverage data for decision making and impact.

SALARY: The salary range, duties and responsibilities of this position meet the requirements of Section 13 (a) (1) of the Fair Labor Standards Act and therefore qualifies as an "exempt" position. The starting salary for this position is targeted between \$56,500 - \$79,000 based upon knowledge, skills, experience, and geographic location, with a comprehensive benefits package.

Organization & Background

Founded in 1998, the **Forum for Youth Investment** is a national nonprofit, nonpartisan "action tank" committed to changing the odds that all children and youth are ready for college, work, and life. The Forum connects leaders to ideas, services and networks that can help them make more intentional decisions that are good for young people, even in the face of limited resources. It helps leaders who are trying to improve & align policies, plan & partner for impact, and/or strengthen programs & adult practice across all the systems and settings where young people spend time.

The Forum is a thriving organization with a budget of \$11 million, a staff of 50, and headquarters in Washington, DC. The Forum is working to advance racial equity in youth serving systems, bridging that work with our internal Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion initiatives. The Forum overall is funded by a mix of foundations, corporations, and a fee-for-service contract base. For more information on the Forum, please visit forumfyi.org.

In 2008, the Forum created the **David P. Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality** to strengthen programs and adult practice by building the capacity of public and private agencies to implement quality improvement and performance systems that simultaneously foster professional learning and whole-child

development. The Weikart Center's research-based core products and services are currently used in over 4,500 out-of-school time settings nationally and form the basis for quality improvement systems in over 140 publicly and privately funded systems. The Weikart Center helps youth-serving systems build the safe, supportive, interactive, and engaging environments that are foundational to youth development. From data-driven tools to expert trainings, we equip leaders who serve young people with the positive youth development and SEL-informed resources they need to create a culture of continuous improvement for staff and for youth.

Position Responsibilities

The Senior CQI specialist is a critical leader in the Forum's work to leverage research, evaluation, and data to strengthen youth-serving systems and ecosystems, and support internal and external stakeholders to build data-driven cultures of continuous improvement. Working across the Forum, this role is a good fit for someone who can plan, conduct, and manage the day-to-day operations for research and evaluation projects with varying degrees of complexity – while synthesizing findings to elevate insights for the field.

(1) **Project Management for Applied Research & Evaluation Projects:**

Lead project planning and management for a variety of applied research and evaluation projects, internally and externally, including the development of research proposals and project budgets. Essential areas of work include (1) management of research and evaluation projects, including design, data collection, analysis, and reporting, using best practices in applied research and data visualization to communicate results that are accurate, practitioner-friendly, and action-oriented; (2) using data and strategy aligned metrics to advance a culture of continuous improvement; (3) oversight and coordination of the work of data associates assigned to specific projects; and (4) regular communication with internal and external stakeholders to ensure all project plans and deliverables are on track.

(2) **Measure Development & Data Collection Systems:** Lead collaborative and cross-functional projects related to measure development and modification (e.g., Program Quality Assessments, surveys) with attention to both user context and scientific validity. Oversee the day-to-day administration and utilization of online systems for data collection, monitoring, and reporting, including Qualtrics, and support junior staff to use data systems effectively as part of research/evaluation projects. Establish and manage both internal and external protocols and training resources for measure use and quality assurance. Facilitate coordination and communication across internal teams to ensure successful design and implementation of research processes, reports, and insights.

- (3) **Research Synthesis and Reporting:** Effectively support organizational and field learning about youth-serving ecosystems that advance positive youth development and racial equity by synthesizing findings within and across projects to elevate insights for the organization and the field. Prepare and present research summaries, briefs, and other non-technical publications for practitioners, policymakers, funders, and other national audiences. Advocate for evidence-based practices related to continuous quality improvement in OST and other youth-serving settings. Leverage evidence-based insights to support new opportunities for the Forum's work, aligned to the strategic plan.
- (4) Assume responsibility for other projects and new assignments related to the scope of this role. Contributes to unit and organization-wide priorities and special projects as appropriate.

Performance/Character Requirements

We are looking for colleagues eager to be on a career path that involves continuous learning and growth. Team members across all levels of the Forum engage with one another and foster the development of others to achieve a high level of competency in these characteristics and leadership qualities:

- **Manages Self** – You ask for feedback on impact of your behavior on others. You identify and follow through on actions in response to constructive feedback. You honestly assess your own strengths and know what weaknesses need support.
- **Leads Courageously** – You act courageously to make changes that will improve the organization. You consistently drive to successful outcomes and stay composed and positive in challenging situations.
- **Communicates Effectively** – You communicate (both in writing and verbally) clearly, succinctly, and in a timely manner. You provide information people need to know to do their jobs, make accurate decisions, and to feel part of a team. You are able to engage an audience and achieve the desired effect in a variety of formal presentation settings.
- **Builds High-Performing Teams/Develops Others** – You form and lead teams capable of getting results. You create a learning environment of creativity and engagement. You can effectively raise and resolve conflict with the team. You provide frequent and timely developmental feedback to others and construct compelling developmental plans. You take personal responsibility for mentoring high-potential employees.
- **Makes Quality Decisions** – You clearly state where you stand on issues, even if it is unpopular. You seek input from appropriate parties before making decisions, and still make timely decisions.
- **Demonstrates Strategic Agility** – You anticipate future consequences and trends accurately. You're able to align your goals to the overall organizational strategy. You can create breakthrough strategies and plans.
- **Demonstrates Business Acumen** – You understand and create opportunities to cultivate and support exceptional partnerships. You are able to make the case for decisions and initiatives. You adapt strategies and tactics to create a success defined by metrics.
- **Influences and Negotiates** – You influence others by building coalitions or alliances among diverse groups. You effectively adapt influence strategies depending upon the situation. You're skillful at removing barriers that get in the way of effective collaboration among groups.
- **Manages Vision and Purpose** – You inspire commitment to a compelling vision and shared values. You create a climate in which people want to do their best. You're able to champion change and lead the organization through a transition.

- **Thinks Strategically, Executes Skillfully** – You can see the forest through the trees and know how to craft strategic short and long-term programs that are aligned with organizational goals. At the same time, you can't wait to roll-up your sleeves and get the work done.
- **Is Goal Oriented** – We want someone who is a doer, with doggedness, a determination and commitment to reach a goal, and a strong bias toward action. You always find a way to make it happen.
- **Demonstrates Creativity** – While there are tried-and-true tactics in your toolbox, you explore new ways of thinking and continually strive to create best-in-class programs that move your organization and field forward.
- **Handles Ambiguity** – You can effectively cope with change and lead others through it.
- **Communicates Assertively** – As a senior-level communicator, you express opinions directly, confidently, and accurately. You can also be very persuasive and influence the way others think, feel, or behave.
- **Collaborates & Values Relationships** – You can quickly gain the respect and trust of your peers, colleagues, and leadership team. You understand the importance of listening, asking probing questions, and allowing others to be heard.
- **Takes Risk** – The entrepreneurial spirit shines through in your willingness to experiment with new approaches and act even though the outcome is uncertain.
- **Models Diplomacy** – You have worked in diverse settings and teams and understand the cultural sensitivities of doing business with partners and clients around the country. You are tactful in dealing with diverse people or situations.
- **Exhibits Professional Acumen** – You demonstrate confidence, experience, and poise under pressure.

Qualifications

Six or more years of experience leading research and evaluation projects in applied settings in youth-serving systems or organizations. A master's degree in youth development, social work, education, or related fields is required (Ph.D. preferred). Candidates with a bachelor's degree plus 6-8 years of applied research and evaluation experience will be considered.

In addition, the successful candidate will have:

- Demonstrated expertise in constructing, managing, and analyzing large, messy datasets, and translating results into concrete and practical applications for non-research audiences
- A track record of designing and implementing research and evaluation projects in ways that reflect an understanding of the effects of place-, race-, policy, and systems-based inequities on marginalized communities.
- Proficiency with SPSS and online survey design and data collection tools, including Qualtrics
- Knowledge of the Weikart Center's Youth Program Quality Assessment, Youth Program Quality Intervention, social and emotional learning resources, and/or low-stakes quality improvement policies and systems

Preferred candidates will also have:

- Direct experience facilitating data use in youth-serving systems or settings, including designing learning content and/or developing supportive resources to promote evaluation capacity building and data use.
- Research and/or practitioner experience with confidence in using insights from research and data to center racial equity and social justice to advance positive youth development across settings.
- Successful history identifying and responding to grant proposals for research and evaluation projects.

This is not an exhaustive list of all responsibilities, duties, skills, efforts, or requirements or working conditions associated with the job. While intended to be an accurate reflection of the current job, management reserves the right to revise the job or to require different tasks. This description does not constitute a contract of employment and The Forum may exercise its employment-at-will rights at any time

Working Environment

Flexibility is required to adapt to the dynamic work environment of a non-profit “action tank” that has national clients and exposure during a key inflection point in the organization’s development. Ability to lead and advise on change management initiatives is essential. The Forum’s Weikart Center team transitioned to be fully remote during the COVID-19 pandemic and is hiring staff to join our fully remote team. Occasional travel is expected for in-person team meetings and client/partner meetings (estimated 5-10% time).

How to Apply

Please send resume and cover letter to: jobs@forumfyi.org. Applications will be reviewed on a rolling basis. If your application is selected for an interview, you will be contacted directly. No telephone calls or inquiry emails, please.

The Forum for Youth Investment is committed to creating a diverse work environment and is proud to be an Equal Opportunity Employer and drug-free workplace, and to comply with ADA regulations as applicable. All applicants are considered for all positions without regard to race, religion, color, sex, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, pregnancy, age, national origin, ancestry, physical/mental disability, severe/morbid obesity, medical condition, military/veteran status, genetic information, marital status, ethnicity, alienage or any other protected classification, in accordance with applicable federal, state, and local laws. We encourage individuals of all backgrounds to apply. If you are a qualified candidate with a disability, please email us at jobs@forumfyi.org if you require a reasonable accommodation to complete your application.